



Department
for Education

Lisa Mannall
Regional Schools Commissioner
for the South West
2 Rivergate, Temple Quay
Bristol, BS1 6EH

Mr Paul Jones
Chair of the Academy Management Committee
Steiner Academy Exeter

7 June 2019

Dear Paul,

Steiner Academy Exeter – sponsorship and next steps

I am writing to update you on the future of the Steiner Academy, Exeter, in your role as Chair of the Academy Management Committee.

Firstly, I would like to thank you and your fellow board members for the significant contribution you have made to supporting the school following its “Inadequate” Ofsted judgment in October 2018. You have brought effective oversight and fresh rigour to the school’s governance, and have enabled the leadership team, in collaboration with Ted Wragg Trust, to make important early steps in the school’s improvement journey. The school-led system is dependent on credible leaders and governors being willing to provide support to challenging schools, often at the cost of considerable personal investment. The time and expertise the committee has dedicated over the turbulent past few months can hardly be overstated.

As you know, the department has considered carefully the options for the future of the school. When an academy is found to require “Special Measures,” the department has the power to transfer it to a sponsor multi-academy trust (MAT) or undertake alternative forms of intervention, including closure. In this case, I have considered all these options carefully, to assess how the needs of pupils can be best met, given the serious concerns about standards and safeguarding raised by Ofsted.

I am pleased to be able to write and confirm that, following an expression of interest process to identify possible sponsor options, the department has approved Avanti Schools Trust as the sponsor in principle for the Steiner Academy Exeter, as well as two other schools based in Bristol and Frome. I hope that this will provide certainty to pupils, parents, and staff about the future of the school, as well as reassurance that the department recognises the urgent need for improved educational standards and continued leadership support. I expect the trust to complete its due diligence with a view to the schools formally transferring in the autumn.

While I believe that Avanti has the capacity to deliver an excellent education for pupils at the Steiner Academy Exeter, I also recognise that this will not be a simple improvement process, and that there will be further challenges ahead. I remain

concerned about the standard of education at the school, particularly for those pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and the RSC office will be closely monitoring progress after the school transfers. In addition, I have asked Avanti to review the all-through operating model and consider whether this is educationally and financially sustainable in the longer term.

I appreciate that the school community will have questions about this next stage, and I have asked Avanti to undertake a listening period for stakeholders before the end of the academic year. This will allow parents and staff to discuss the trust's vision for a new culture of high educational standards and child development within the school, as well as changes to aspects of teaching and the school curriculum. Avanti will write shortly to confirm details and timescales for this process.

I would be grateful if you could ensure that this letter is copied to the Academy Management Committee, the Members of the Steiner Academy Exeter trust, and the school's senior leadership team; I would additionally ask that you ensure a copy is made available on the school's website for parents and staff.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Mannall', followed by a small dot.

Lisa Mannall
Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West